Chapter 2
Changing Approaches to Educational Environments: Valuing the Margins, Interstices and Liminalities of Learning Spaces

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ABSTRACT
Many discussions about teaching and learning spaces research concern what happens at an educational place. This chapter looks less at the physical place and more into potential spaces – the notional margins, interstices, and liminalities that are outside, between, and on the fringes of defined places. It advocates looking at spaces to bring new and different understandings, like “smooth and striated” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to what learning and teaching spaces might mean for dramatically changing global educational environments and practices.

Rather than seeing a student’s classroom, workroom, lecture hall, and lab as a singular person’s situation or place, the authors of this chapter propose seeing and thinking conceptually about spatial-dimensional multiplicities for identities. That is seeing various coextensive situations and sites both out and indoors (where ‘doors’ may also be ‘walls’) as activities and areas not pre-bound or specified for particular individual purposes, and thinking about these by bringing different mind-views to conceptualising collaborative activities in spaces as complex knowledge generating affects.

INTRODUCTION
For they inquire of the parts...but they inquire not of the secrecies of the passages. (Francis Bacon, The advancement of learning, 1605)

The concept of learning spaces expresses the idea that there are diverse forms of spaces within the life and life world of the academic where opportunities to reflect and analyse their own learning position occur...[s]uch learning spaces are places of engagement where often disconnected thoughts...
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and ideas, that have been inchoate, begin to cohere as a result of some kind of suspension from daily life (Savin-Baden, 2008, p. 7).

[In anatomy], potential space...is commonly used to describe a space which is not evident until it is created by distension or blunt dissection...it could be argued...that potential space is both an abstract concept and an oxymoron (Farinon, 2005).

The place where cultural experience is located is in the potential space between the individual and the environment. ... The same can be said of playing. Cultural experience begins with creative living first manifested as play (Winnicott, 1971, p. 100).

Learning for earning has for too long been a predominant educational premise. As David Perkins (2008) poignantly remarks “...the world would be a better place if more people energetically integrated merely competent knowledge [rather than excellent possessive knowledge] from diverse sources on such fronts as political, economic and ecological responsibility” (p. 16). In this chapter we contend that the growing concern about problematics of living in the contemporary world presages a tectonic shift in educational approach, a move “beyond understanding” (p. 3) to insight and adaptation of our learning tools. In expectation of such a shift, there is a need to review and reconceptualise how education works for teaching and learning, especially with regard to the complex interactions between people and environments.

Here, drawing on a variety of recent theoretical work, we briefly explore and discuss new and different ways of thinking about identities, activities, spaces and organisation that affect teaching and learning (Bauman, 2000; Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998; Castells, et al., 1999; De Landa, 2002; Deleuze, 1993; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Land, Meyer, & Smith, 2008; Lefebvre, 1991; Lefebvre & Goonewardena, 2008; Meyer & Land, 2006). We also touch on impacts of complex pedagogical and technological change in higher education and explain implications of this for educational environments, practices and policies (Barnett, 2000, 2005; Laurillard, 2002; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Temple, 2008).

Educational structures have, in principle, remained much the same for centuries (Figure 1). However, although the two structures in this illustration are familiar there is considerable difference in what is happening in each realm: one displays constructed ordered space, the other imaginative chaotic space. Our chapter tries to imagine the relationship between the two. We introduce concepts about spaces that are becoming imagined rather than undergoing construction, and the creative tension that can exist when designers address the tensions and interplay between imagination, space and construction. The importance of such concepts are their helpful commensurability with emerging theories and practices involving issues and matters of dynamic systems, chaos and complexity that are increasingly perturbing society at large – extreme volatility in global economics and climate conditions, for example.

To be specific, the main issue is that ever-increasing anachronisms, redundancies and tensions now extend beyond education into current and future understandings of ‘place’, ‘playing’ and ‘working’. Traditional concepts such as lectures, seminars, transmission, conduit, receivers, schedules, experiments, readings, essays and examinations can become problematic, impoverished, or obstacles to learning. More often now, challenging teaching situations (large mixed-age/culture/language cohorts, for example) call for practice inquiries using different conceptions of thinking and working as ways for generatively affecting new technologies and practices such as Peer2peer, wiki and work-learning. This invites collaborative thought-work for generating practice, space production and software rather than vice-versa.

When this happens, we see practice inquiries becoming synthesised as affective moments in